



## **Multi-National Corps – Iraq**

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### **Polar Bears air assault into terrorist safe haven**

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**QARGHULI VILLAGE, Iraq** — Qarghulli Village has long been known as a safe haven for terrorists. For several months the area had not been patrolled by U.S. forces because of the danger it posed. Knowing the high enemy threat in the area did not stop Commando Brigade infantrymen from going in.

Soldiers from the Company D, 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment “Polar Bears,” 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI), teamed up with soldiers from the 4th Battalion, 4th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, to conduct an air assault mission, Operation Polar Black Diamond, into Quarghuli Village on the early morning of Nov. 25.

As the Soldiers boarded one of the four helicopters that took them from Mahmudiyah, Iraq, to Qarghuli Village they shared their thoughts of the mission.

“I think this mission will help to eliminate the terrorist activity in the area,” said Sgt Jereme Brown, a 4-31 infantryman and native of Moody, Ala. “We are going in there to make it a safer place for the Iraqi people.”

When the Soldiers landed to their interim destination they found themselves on some of the most unforgiving terrain. They had to push through canals,

muddy fields and even across barbed wire while the night-vision goggles offered their only form of sight. Although the terrain was tough and the company found themselves lying in fields filled with cow manure as they pulled security, they stayed focused on the mission.

The troops knew that their mission would not be complete until they established the battle position in the village. The battle position established would be the western most outpost in the Polar Bear area of operations.

During the foot march the U.S. and Iraqi soldiers worked together to clear houses in the area. They found a total of three AK-47s and magazines in the houses they searched.

After seven hours of foot marching the Soldiers had finally reached their destination – the battle position they had to establish.

As soon as the Soldiers arrived to their new home they immediately started pulling security and patrolling the local area looking for suspicious activity.

Spc. Katherine Cobb, a female search team member attached to 4-31, spoke of what it was like to be a part of the mission.

“I was extremely excited when I found out I was going on the mission,” said Cobb, a native of Holley, N.Y. “I like going on patrols, talking with the local nationals and seeing what they need.”

As the Soldiers patrolled the area they saw ten Iraqis placing improvised-explosive devices in culvert locations along Route Malibu. The Iraqi soldiers quickly detained them for further questioning.

"I am happy we found the terrorists who were placing IEDs on the road," said Lt. Ahmed, and Iraqi soldier with 4th Batt., 4th Bde. 6th IA Div. "I am here because I want to help my country, the Iraqi people and my Army friends."

Upon further questioning the Iraq soldiers were given information of terrorists and caches in the local area.

"I am confident with the Iraqi army," said Sgt. Albert Lopez, a 4-31 infantryman from San Pedro, Calif. "I have worked with the Iraqi soldiers since I have been in Iraq and I am confident about what they are doing."

One of the detainees led the U.S. troops and Iraqi soldiers to the weapons caches where items such as spools of wire, two pressure plates, three portable phones, five manuals about portable phones and a large metal object with wheels buried in the ground. They also uncovered a buried container that terrorists frequently use to hide weapons.

"The Soldiers have performed well on this mission as they do on all missions," said Capt. Don Jamoles, Company D, 4-31 commander and native of Salinas, Calif. "My Soldiers have been working well with the Iraqi soldiers on this mission. They (the U.S. Soldiers) provided outer security of the area while the Iraqis conducted searches themselves."

Jamoles went on to describe what it was like working with the IA during the mission.

"Two years ago it was difficult to get Iraqi soldiers onto helicopters," he said. "Now it is second nature. The Iraqi soldiers have done an excellent job and are showing improvement in taking control of situations themselves."

Although the Soldiers successfully established the battle position the enemy threat was still present.

“While I was on top of the house I heard a loud bang so I got down on the ground,” said 2nd Lt. Thad Wescott, a native of Sterling, Ill., who serves as a 4-31 platoon leader. “I did not realize I was shot until I saw blood. I am thankful I am alive.”

Wescott was shot by an enemy sniper while manning the roof of the house.

Sgt. Sean Sanders, a medic with 4-31 and native of Stewart, Fla., described what it was like to treat Wescott, whose wound was slight.

“Any time I go on a mission I always hope that I do not have to work ... If I do not have to work that means no one got hurt,” Sanders said. “But since I do have to work I am glad that this is all I have to do. I am always worried (about the Soldiers) because I never want anything bad to happen to them.”

The Soldiers of Company D will continue to man the battle position as long until the area is safe from terrorists.

“We will continue to provide force protection for the battle position until there is freedom of movement along Route Malibu,” Jamoles said. “And we will provide security for coalition forces and the people of Qarghulli Village.”

The commitment of the Polar Bears and troops from the 4-4, 6<sup>th</sup> IA Div., allowed them to start decreasing the terrorist activity in the area and deny them of their safe haven.



### **Air Assault 1.**

Sgt. Sean Sanders, a medic with the 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment “Polar Bears,” 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI), and native of Stewart, Fla., climbs down the stairs of the battle position that the Polar Bears established in Qarghulli Village, Iraq, Nov. 25. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Angela McKinzie, 2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. Public Affairs)



## **Air Assault 2.**

Pvt. Arthur Rocha (right), an infantryman with the 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment “Polar Bears,” 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI), and native of Fertile, Minn., searches a haystack for hidden weapons in Qarghulli Village, Iraq, Nov. 25. . (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Angela McKinzie, 2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. Public Affairs)



### **Air Assault 5.**

An infantryman with the 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment "Polar Bears," 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI), pulls security on the newly established battle position in Qarghulli Village, Iraq, Nov. 25. . (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Angela McKinzie, 2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. Public Affairs)



### **Air Assault 7.**

Capt. Don Jamoles, commander of Company D, 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment “Polar Bears,” 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI), and native of Salinas, Calif., gives a situational report to the 4-31 tactical operations center after establishing a battle position in Qarghulli Village, Iraq, Nov. 25. . (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Angela McKinzie, 2nd BCT, 10th Mtn. Div. Public Affairs)

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